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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRO PARLIAMENT OPENS DOOR TO KOSOVO RECOGNITION

REF: (A) PODGORICA 203 (B) STATE 104222

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In its first session since the summer recess, the Montenegrin Parliament adopted a controversial resolution endorsing Montenegro's policy of Euro-Atlantic integration. In the debate beforehand, FM Rocen and PM Djukanovic both suggested that integration with Europe implies a responsibility to recognize Kosovo. Serb list leader Andrija Mandic threatened to call for public protests against the government if it recognizes Kosovo, however overall public reaction has been muted. END SUMMARY.

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Parliament Adopts "Difficult" Decision  
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12. (U) After seven hours of debate, the parliament passed the "Resolution on Montenegro's Acceleration of the Euro-Atlantic Integration Process," with 45 votes by the ruling DPS/SDP coalition, along with ethnic Albanian and Bosniak parties. Twenty-one deputies of the SL, SNP, NS, DSS and Liberal Party (LP) voted against. The resolution states that Montenegro is "ready to recognize the political reality that EU and NATO countries evaluate as significant for regional stability and follow the policy which is on the road toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration." The resolution is widely believed to provide the basis for Montenegro's future policy on Kosovo. Local press quoted the Serbian Ambassador to Montenegro, Zoran Lutovac, and Serbian party officials as saying that relations between Serbia and Montenegro would deteriorate if Montenegro recognizes Kosovo.

Opposition Back in Parliament and Fired Up Over Kosovo  
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13. (SBU) The prospect of debate over the GoM's possible recognition of Kosovo brought the majority of opposition parties back to parliament for the first day of the fall session on October 3. The opposition had earlier boycotted parliament in protest over the decision in June by Public Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) to cease live broadcasting of all parliamentary sessions (REF A). Though the broadcasting issue

has not been settled, RTCG did cover today's session, citing the national interests at stake in the day's proceedings. All the Serb parties attended, with only the Movement for Change (PzP) sticking to the boycott. Many speculate that PzP used the broadcasting issue as an excuse to avoid the session without losing face because of its ambivalence on Kosovo's independence.

#### GoM Leadership Out in Force

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14. (SBU) The President, Prime Minister and a majority of GoM ministers attended the session. Deputy PM Gordana Djurovic and FM Milan Rocen explained the resolution in the broader context of Euro-Atlantic integration. Reminding the parliament that most EU and NATO countries have recognized Kosovo, Rocen said that "responsible conduct by a country that wants to be part of EU and NATO leads towards recognition of Kosovo." The purpose of the parliamentary session was to review the Resolution, which would be the basis for the GoM's decision on the Kosovo issue.

15. (SBU) Efforts to delay or derail the resolution failed. The People's Party (NS) submitted six amendments to the Resolution requiring a national referendum on recognizing Kosovo or joining NATO. The leader of the Albanian Alternative party(AA), Vasej Sinistaj, proposed an amendment urging Parliament to recognize Kosovo's independence as soon as possible.

16. (U) In his speech to the assembly, Socialist People's Party (SNP) president Milic called on PM Djukanovic to name "the

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foreign diplomats who exert pressure on the GoM to recognize Kosovo". Another SNP parliamentarian, Vasilije Lalosevic, said that he hoped that Kosovo's recognition would not come from "Cetinje", referring to Kosovo PM Hasim Thaci's statement last week that "more recognitions of Kosovo would follow which would surprise Serbia."

17. (U) NS Head of the Foreign Relations Committee, Dragan Soc, made numerous impassioned pleas against the recognition of Kosovo and stated that "the U.S. Ambassador said that the U.S. would not exert pressure on Montenegro to recognize Kosovo. But look what they are doing to us today when we are so brutally exposed to the will of great powers." Soc also insisted that the GoM reveal who in the international community was applying pressure on the GoM.

18. (U) Pro-Serbian SL leader Andrija Mandic and Democratic Serbian Party (DSS) head Ranko Kadic demanded the ruling coalition Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)/ Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) withdraw the Resolution from the agenda. Mandic threatened to call for popular protests if the government recognizes Kosovo. Other opposition leaders who spoke after Mandic did not support calling protests.

19. (U) Kemal Purisic of the Bosniak Party (BS) and Mehmed Bardhi of the ethnic Albanian Democratic Alliance (DSCG) urged parliament to adopt the Resolution. AA president Sinistaj stated that "some diplomatic representatives in the countries of the former SFRY told me that recognition of Kosovo is fait accompli."

¶10. (U) Speaker of Parliament Ranko Krivokapic denied that foreign pressure was exerted on Montenegro to recognize Kosovo, saying it had merely received "recommendations" to recognize Kosovo.

¶11. (U) Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic was the final speaker and enumerated the reasons why adoption of the resolution was in Montenegro's interest. He added that recognition of Kosovo is a natural part of Euro-Atlantic integration, a responsibility implied by the resolution. He denied that the ruling coalition is using the resolution to hide its responsibility for any decision to recognize Kosovo.

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Comment

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¶12. (SBU) Local media have portrayed GoM recognition of Kosovo as virtually a foregone conclusion. However, the GoM is still playing its cards close to the vest, evidently gauging public and international reaction at each step. The initiative now rests with the Prime Minister and cabinet, whose next regular session is scheduled for October 9. If that is indeed the scenario, the decision could become more complicated if the UNGA votes soon to support Serbia's request for an ICG opinion on Kosovo's independence. End Comment.  
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